

CONFLICT-RELATED DISPLACEMENT NEPAL

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GLOSSARY

APF	Armed Police Force
CDO	Chief District Officer
DDC	District Development Committee
FfW	Food for Work
HDCS	Human Development and Community Service
HMG/N	His Majesty's Government of Nepal
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
INF	International Nepal Fellowship
MoHA	Ministry of Home Affairs
NGO	Non- Government Organization
NRCS	Nepal National Red Cross Society
RCIW	Rural Community Infrastructure Works
RNA	Royal Nepal Army
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNM	United Mission to Nepal
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VDC	Village Development Committee
WFP	World Food Program

A. MAIN OBJECTIVE

To gather information concerning the number, type, location and needs of Internally Displaced People (IDPs) and to make recommendations for future plans of action.

B. METHODOLOGY

Gathering of existing information from government officials, United Nations agencies, the Red Cross movement and major NGOs and organizations working in development programs at the central and district level in the Mid and Far Western Regions. A first round of meetings was held in Kathmandu. In this initial phase, press monitoring was also a key element.

In order to assess the situation in Terai districts neighbouring conflict- affected areas and obtain first hand information, two field trips were conducted at the end of June and beginning of July 2002, to Banke, Kailali, Kanchanpur and Dadeldhura districts. In each district, appointments with government officials such as District Chief Officers (CDOs) and District Development Committee (DDC) chairmen were held. In addition, meetings with NGOs and UN agencies working in the areas were conducted. When possible, local human rights groups, volunteers in development programs and local inhabitants were interviewed. A trip to Surkhet district was cancelled due to security concerns.

A series of meetings was then held at the central level with different NGOs and United Nations agencies, with a view of reviewing information gathered in the field.

C. SITUATION ANALYSIS

Nepal is a country that according to the latest census in 2001 has a total population of 23.3 million. Almost half of the population (47.3 per cent) are between 15 and 49 years of age, with 80 per cent of the population living in rural areas. Nepal has a low human development index and ranks 129 out of 162 countries with 42 per cent of the population below the poverty line and 20 per cent extremely poor.¹

According to the UNDP "Millennium Development Goals Progress Report, 2002", the income per head across the regions worsened for the Far and Mid Western Regions between 1996 and 1999. Districts such as Rolpa, Jajarkot and Salyan had 25%, 19% and 17% respectively of the average income per

¹ UNDP, Human Development Report 2001. Oxford University Press, New York.

capita of residents of Kathmandu. This provides evidence of a failure in development in areas where the conflict is the most deeply rooted.

The insurgency that began as a localized phenomenon in the 3 mid western mountain districts of Rolpa, Rukum and Jajarkot, the western district of Gorkha and the eastern district of Sindhuli has now spread to 73 of Nepal's 75 districts. During 2001, there was an escalation of the conflict and since the failure of the peace talks in November 2001, it entered into a phase of greater intensity that has evolved from a medium intensity conflict into a high intensity conflict.²

Both, the Maoists and security forces have engaged in activities against civilians. Many human rights organizations, including Amnesty International, have claimed that the security forces have in many places actually killed more innocent civilians than guerrillas. The police are also accused of extra-judicial killings and disappearance of persons in custody. And the Maoists have recently increased their pressure on the civilian communities with a forced recruitment policy and a significant increase in the brutality of their attacks against civilians, teachers and community leaders in particular.

To date, two-thirds of the 23 million people of Nepal have been affected one way or the other by the armed conflict.³

Because of the rapid deterioration of the security situation and its consequences for ordinary Nepalese citizens, the issue of conflict-related displacement has recently become of interest to the media, the government and donor agencies. As very little evidence exists as to the extent of the problem and the priority needs to be addressed, USAID has commissioned this study on conflict-related displacement, its dimensions and the implications for ordinary civilians living in the most affected Mid and Far Western Regions of Nepal.

D. MIGRATION PATTERNS AND CONFLICT-RELATED DISPLACEMENT

Nepal has traditional patterns of internal and international migration, mostly related to the search for better job opportunities. However, the outbreak of the Maoist insurgency in 1996 and most especially, the deterioration of the security situation after the failure of peace talks at the end of 2001, have modified these patterns and forcibly uprooted certain groups of population from their homes.

² High intensity armed conflict: at least 1,000 battle-related deaths per year. Wallenstein and Sollenberg, 2000.

³ South Asia Analysis Group, Dr. Chitra Tiwari. 20.01.01.

1. Seasonal migration

Seasonal migration in Nepal from the highlands to the lowlands in winter has a long history in the country. The massive internal migration was facilitated by the building of the east-west and north-south highways, and after malaria was controlled in the south.⁴

Lack of work in the mountains and hills during the slack agricultural season in winter, of non-agricultural sources of income and of basic services annually induce a large number of Nepalese workers to move to the Terai and India in search for work. The largest number of migrants to India comes from landless groups, the highly indebted and members of the “low caste” groups and is especially high in the Far Western Region.⁵ Wealthier people tend to go to East and South Asian countries where earnings are significantly higher.

Other factors that have contributed to the large numbers of people migrating to India on a seasonal basis are the open border between Nepal and India, high demand for cheap labour in India and a common linguistic and cultural background across the border. Needless to say that the fact that the Far Western Region is better linked by road to India than other parts of Nepal has also played an important role.

There is no available data on the exact scale of seasonal migration, but some studies conducted in villages in the Western Region have shown that between 60-80 percent of the male population are away from home during the winter.

The official current figure on the number of labour migrants (except those in India) is about 12,000. However, independent estimates show that more than 200,000 people have gone to several countries as foreign workers from Nepal. Other figures indicate that as many as 500,000 Nepalese workers are working abroad.⁶

Concerning the benefits obtained from migrant labour, many argue that remittances form a high proportion of the total household income for the seasonal migrants’ households.⁷ However, other studies show that in poor households, especially in the Far Western Region, the benefits from migration are low and consist mainly in a reduced number of household members to be fed on the household income at the place of origin. There is also a general observation that migrant households are poorer than non-migrant households, with less access to agricultural production.⁸

⁴ Report by Juhee Suwal. Canadian Population Society Annual Conference, 2001.

⁵ HMG Employment Promotion Commission, 2002.

⁶ HMG’s Employment Promotion Commission; Rising Nepal, 08 June 2002

⁷ According to Seddon, Adhikari and Gurung, 2000 and the Employment Promotion Commission of Nepal, about a quarter of Nepalese households receive remittances and in rural areas off-farm work is an important part of rural livelihoods accounting for about 38% of income.

⁸ Poverty, Migration and HIV/AIDS. ILO and National Center for AIDS and STD control, June 2002.

For those migrant Nepalese workers who return home with remittances, the deterioration of the security situation in Nepal places them at the risk of robbery and subject to extortion by the Maoists. In some Asian countries, migrant workers use an informal money transfer system through private agents as it is a cheap and efficient form of money transfer and involves lower transaction costs and a better exchange rate. However, this so-called *Hundi* system is not applicable in India.

The flow of migrants across the border into India has dramatically increased since the escalation of the conflict in 2001, and especially after the imposition of the state of emergency, according to district and municipal authorities in the Mid and Far Western Regions. The majority of migrants are male youths escaping forced recruitment into the Maoist forces and the pressure imposed on them by HMG/N's security forces. As the Nepalese-Indian border is open, there are no available figures as to the extent of the increase in migration.

According to Douglas Coutts of WFP, "the unrest in Nepal has affected the traditional coping mechanisms of communities. Men used to leave to work and come back with cash or food. Much of that traditional migration has been affected".⁹ In fact, at the beginning of the monsoon many men return from India to Nepal in order to help in the rice planting. A phenomenon widely observed by district government officials and development workers in Nepalganj –one of the main crossing points to India- is that very few people are returning home this planting season.

2. Conflict-related Displacement

With the deterioration of the security situation in 2001, in many mid and far western districts the Maoists expanded their intimidation and violence practices targeting landowners, members of the ruling party, VDC chairmen and wealthy people. As a result, most of them decided to migrate to the district headquarters in search of safety. In recent months, remaining government officials and teachers under threat from the Maoists have been forced to migrate from their villages. Field reports indicate that these targeted persons have, in most of the cases, moved to the district headquarters leaving their families behind. Those reports also suggest that the families are not being further threatened at this stage.

The declaration by the Maoists of the "district people's government" strategy in August 2001 and the beginning of forced recruitment from every family of one young man or woman, prompted the increased exodus of young people to India. In addition, the military pressure from the security forces since the imposition of the state of emergency in November 2001 has further increased the migration of especially males aged 13-28.¹⁰

⁹ Nepali Times, 10-16 May 2002.

¹⁰ Nepali Times, 8-14 March / 14-20 June 2002; Himalayan Times, 19 May 2002.

- HMG/N's data collection system

At the end of 2001 the government decided to establish a system to collect data on people claiming to be affected by the ongoing Maoist uprising, including internally displaced, in all Nepal's 75 districts. The data collection system relies on information submitted to the Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA) by the Chief District Officers (CDOs).

The system aims to provide accurate information as to how many people need assistance or compensation in every district and to record the funds released by the government to cover these claims.

People claiming to be affected by the ongoing situation have to register their names with the CDO in their respective districts. Once the CDO has considered the validity of the claim, the registered names are provided to the MoHA in Kathmandu for further revision and approval. Once approval at the central level is granted, the money is sent to the district for distribution.

The CDO of Lalitpur has received the authority from the MoHA to manage all information and resources concerning displaced or victims of the conflict resettled in the three Kathmandu Valley municipalities (Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur). In order to access these funds, the applicants should have been previously registered by the CDOs in their districts of origin.

In relation to those covered by the government data, CDOs from Banke, Kanchanpur and Dadeldhura districts admitted that only victims of the Maoists request to be registered. This could be explained by the fear of those affected by the actions of the Police or the military to be labelled as Maoists if they file a claim. The fact that CDOs chair the District Security Committee constituted by the Royal Nepal Army (RNA), the Armed Police Force (APF) and the Police in every district would exacerbate this fear and could be an additional deterrent for affected common civilians to seek some sort of government compensation.

Data obtained in the field indicates that the figures on the number of victims provided by central authorities at the MoHA are larger than those obtained from CDOs in three districts in the Far Western Region during the same period of time. In contrast, in Banke district the MoHA reported 7 people displaced while the CDO argue that he has registered more than 100. Unfortunately, the sample of districts is far too small to draw a definitive conclusion on this issue.

According to field sources, to date, only politicians from the ruling party and people well connected with the CDOs have accessed government resources, especially funds related to compensation for damage to property and assets.

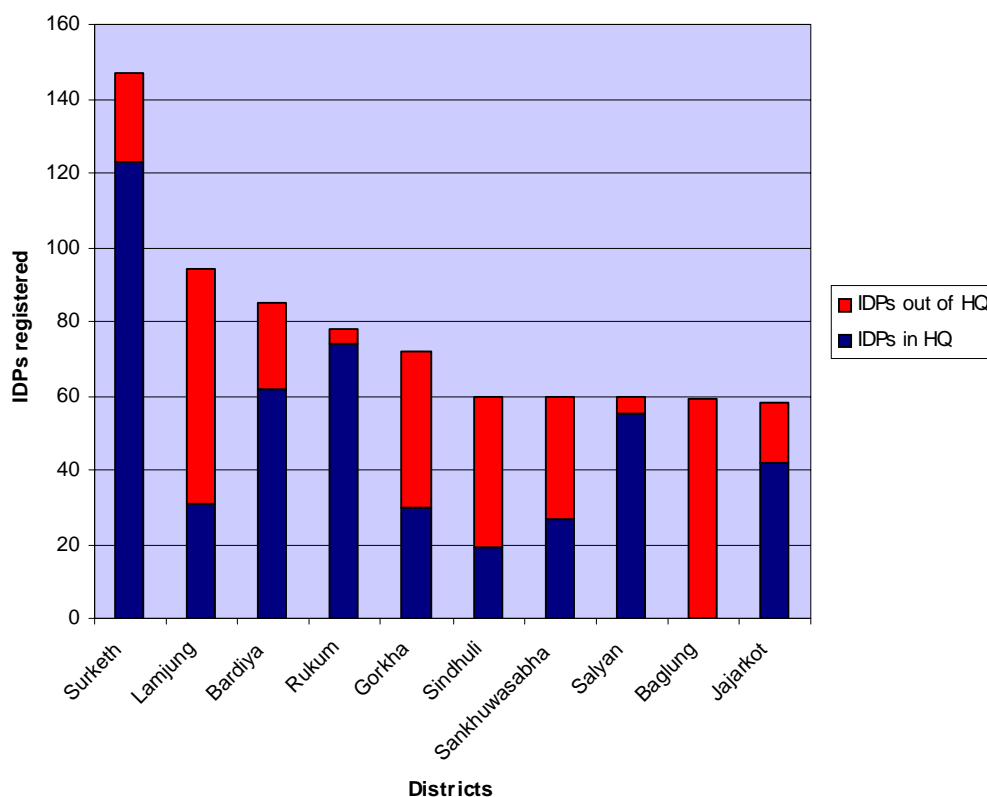
In conclusion, the government's data collection system cannot be considered a source of accurate information primarily because only victims of the Maoists register at the CDO office. People directly or indirectly affected by the actions of the Security Forces do not register. In addition, the provision of compensation after registration appears to be heavily politicized and the data is therefore highly likely to be subject to manipulation.

- Dimensions of conflict-related displacement

HMG/N Data

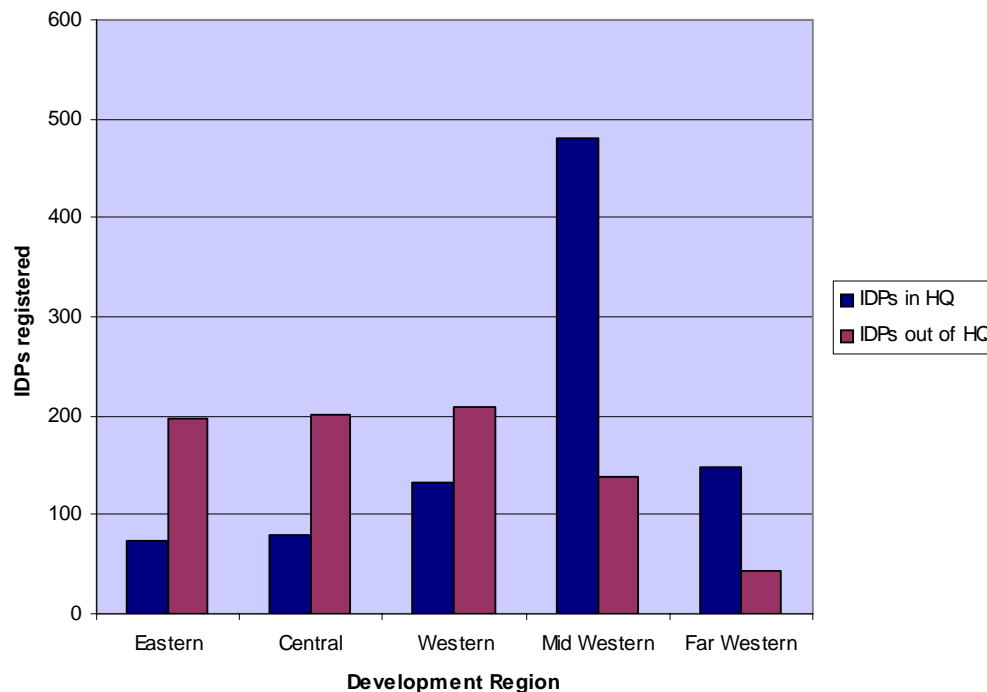
The MoHA has collected data indicating that a total of 1,706 individuals have been registered as IDPs in a total of 62 districts by the end of June 2002. According to these data, the most affected districts are Surketh, Bardiya, Rukum, Salyan and Jajarkot in the Mid Western Region; Lamjung, Gorkha and Baglung in the Western Region and Sindhuli and Sankhuwasabha in the Central and Eastern Regions respectively. See *Chart 1*. For detailed information per district, refer to Annex 1.

CHART 1: MOST AFFECTED DISTRICTS



People registered as “out of the headquarters” include those who have decided to move to another district and more often to larger cities such as Nepalganj and Kathmandu. In the Eastern, Central and Western Regions, this category comprises the vast majority of displaced. In contrast, in the Mid and Far Western regions, most of the people displaced remain in the district headquarters. See *chart 2*.

CHART 2: PEOPLE DISPLACED PER REGION



According to the CDO of Lalitpur, the total number of people registered as IDPs throughout the country has drastically increased from around 200 in December 2001 to almost 2,000 in June 2002. This could indicate an increase in the level of displacement but also a higher level of awareness amongst communities displaced about government compensation packages.

Considering that only one adult per family has been registered at a CDO office and that the average household size in Nepal is 5.6, one can assume that according to the official figures about 9,550 individuals have been directly affected by forced displacement. Although this figure seems large, when compared with the number of victims directly affected by the loss of one member of their families since the imposition of the state of emergency (16,200)¹¹ it becomes less significant.

¹¹ According to a RNA statement released on the 8th of June 2002, a total of 991 members of the Army, Armed Police Force and Police along with 1'900 Maoist rebels have been killed since November 2001.

National Red Cross Society (NRCS) data

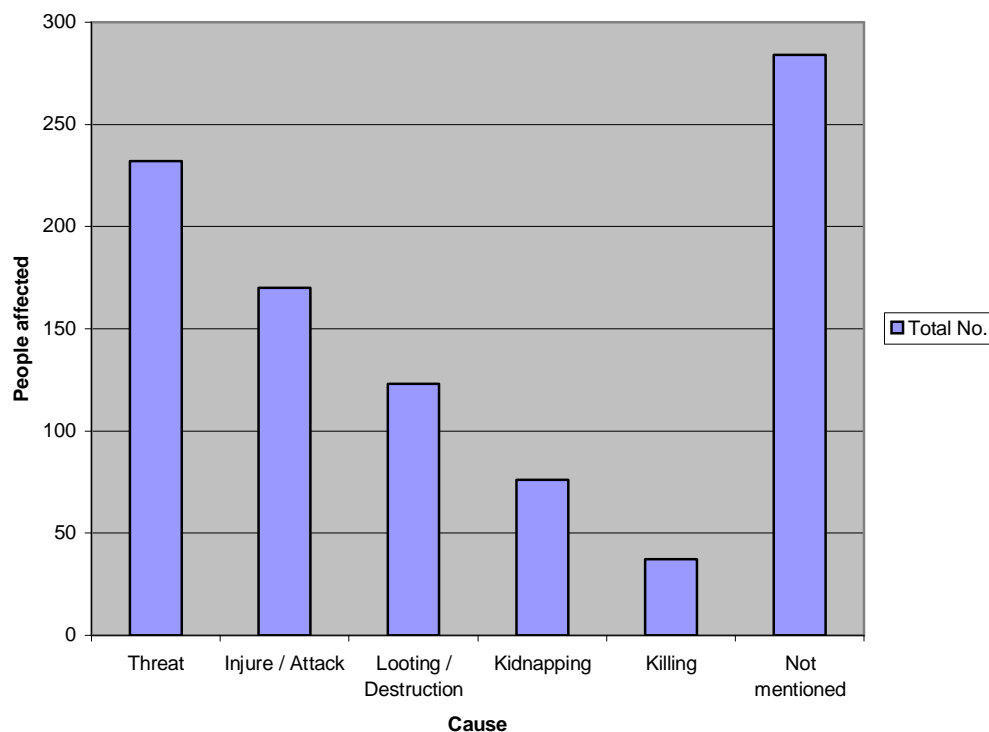
According to information collected by the National Red Cross Society (NRCS) in a survey conducted in June 2002, nearly a thousand people have been displaced in eight districts: Syangja, Gorkha and Gulmi in the Western Region; Humla, Kalikot and Surketh in the Mid Western Region and Pachtar and Doti in the Eastern and Far Western Regions respectively.

It is important to note that the 922 individuals registered by the NRCS in the eight districts clearly surpass the 342 people registered by the CDOs in the same areas. This may be explained by the fact that the NRCS in some cases has registered entire families while the CDO office only registers one person per family. However, it is also possible that the NRCS has been able to identify individuals not registered by the government. Unfortunately, the information provided by the NRCS at the central level does not clarify the situation further.

Although the information collected by the NRCS is not complete, it is possible to extract some useful information on gender and causes of displacement. Unfortunately, as there is no data available concerning age groups, conclusions about children and elderly displaced cannot be drawn.

The NRCS has registered 52% male and 48% female internally displaced in the eight districts analysed. Such gender distinction cannot be derived from the official government records.

Concerning the cause of displacement, 26% moved due to threats, 18% as a result of physical attack and subsequent injuries, 13% have their property looted or destroyed and the rest were either related to someone kidnapped or killed or have not mentioned the reason in the survey. See *Chart 3*.

CHART 3: CAUSES OF DISPLACEMENT

- Types of displaced

From discussions in the field, it is possible to distinguish three main categories of people that have been affected by the conflict and whose patterns of displacement differ one from the other.

Wealthier groups

To date, the vast majority of people displaced in the Mid Western and Far Western Regions are landlords, Nepali Congress Party Members, VDC chairmen and teachers. All of them have settled in the district headquarters and in larger cities such as Nepalganj and Kathmandu, using their own resources or after receiving government compensation.

Due to the fact that the influx of these category of displaced to the headquarters has taken place in a gradual manner, there is no data as to the real extent of the displacement. However, indirect indicators that support the fact of displacement are an increase in house construction, in the presence of non-locals and in demand for education services in schools.

Youths

Since the imposition of the state of emergency in November 2001, a large number of youths, especially male, have migrated to India. Although this is a traditional phenomenon, the main reasons for the increase in numbers are the fear of forced recruitment and harassment by the Maoists and of intimidation by the security forces.

Due to the fact that the Nepal-India border is open, there are no means to quantify the increase in migration. However, indirect indicators are larger numbers of people requesting VDC recommendation letters and passports in recent months. Sources at the MoHA pointed out that the migration of youths to India could in fact be larger as the higher demand of documents only relates to those individuals that have not requested documents in the past and excludes a large number of people who have already obtained them.

Various NGOs based in Nepalganj, Banke district, also agree on the increase in youth migration across the border. Recently, about 250 youths from the conflict-affected areas tried to enter India by bus. Even though they were blocked at the border, eventually they were allowed to leave Nepal. Recent press reports also suggest that thousands of Nepalese youths, especially those from the far western part of the country have been compelled to take shelter at different Asrams in India after fleeing their conflict-affected homeland.¹²

Poorer groups

The media and diverse human rights organizations have been recently providing information about ordinary civilians fleeing their villages with the fear of been caught in the crossfire in district such as Rolpa or Lamjung.¹³ However, and despite the alleged large displacement of rural people from conflict-affected areas, there are no consistent reports indicating the extent and dimensions of the problem.

According to field data, the poorest sectors of the rural communities have not moved to district headquarters or the larger cities primarily because they do not have economic means to resettle. A sense of attachment to their land might also contribute to their decision to endure the harsh conditions in their villages. There is information that suggests that many rural areas in conflict-affected districts are now only inhabited by the most vulnerable: women, children and the elderly.

A number of factors directly related to the conflict worsen the critical situation for these rural communities. The fact that most able-bodied men have either joined or fled the fighting has left many villages with a severely reduced labour

¹² Himalayan Times, 01 July 02.

¹³ Nepali Times, 18-24 January / 8-14 March 2002.

force. In addition, food shipments have been delayed or cancelled due to the destruction of roads and airports in remote districts. In districts such as Mugu and Jajarkot about 15,000 poor people are directly affected by the suspension of the Food for Work (FfW) program.

In addition, in a conflict situation the communities have fewer income-generation activities to earn money to buy food in the markets and the food is not readily available, and it is more expensive. Moreover, some farmers grow less, as they are afraid of their crops being taken by the Maoists. The food insecurity in the hills and mountains in the west of Nepal has probably greatly deteriorated in recent months.¹⁴

For these reasons, one of the most serious results of the conflict is, therefore, the major risk to food sufficiency and nutritional conditions amongst the most vulnerable in remote mountainous and conflict-affected districts, in other words, those who remain behind in the villages. The poorest are likely to become even more vulnerable with the persistence of the conflict.

E. CONFLICT-RELATED DISPLACEMENT PER REGION

1. MID WESTERN REGION

Most of the people displaced in the Mid Western Region have moved to Nepalganj or Kathmandu. In Banke district, the vast majority of IDPs are members of the Nepalese Congress Party who have been threatened by the Maoist or whose family members have been injured or killed. The districts of origin mainly are Bardiya, Humla, Jumla, Surketh, Jajarkot, Rolpa and Dang.

As these newcomers have economic resources, they have either moved in with relatives or build new housing and businesses. There are no specific settlements or camps for internally displaced in Nepalganj or the surrounding villages. According to the Municipality, the gradual but large influx of people has increased the demand on public services, such as water, sanitation and schooling.

The district and local administration in Banke confirmed that displaced people with less economic resources tend to resettle in smaller Terai cities such as Mahendranagar, in Kanchanpur district, or Surketh. The poorest of the community, who do not have means to even pay transportation fares, are left behind in the villages despite the unfavorable security environment.

According to the CDO in Banke, there are no specific programs in the district aimed to address the needs of IDPs or to identify and provide services to orphans and widows from conflict-affected areas.

¹⁴ Extracts of an interview given by Douglas Coutts, WFP Director, to the Nepali Times. 10-16.05.02

2. FAR WESTERN REGION

This region has a mixture of highly conflict-affected districts, such as Dadeldhura and Kailali, and less affected ones such as Baitadi or Kanchanpur. And each district provides a particular pattern of conflict displaced and level of youth migration across the border.

Kailali District

Kailali is a district where only 4 VDC offices out of 42 remain intact. According to the DDC chairman, during the daytime the security forces are in control, but at night the Maoists take over. Since the imposition of the state of emergency, there is a strict night curfew in all district municipalities, villages and roads.

Most of the displaced people from districts such as Doti, Achham, Dadeldhura and Baitadi use Dangadhi, Kailali's headquarters, as a transit point in their way to Nepalganj and Kathmandu. Due to the lack of employment opportunities, displaced people only settle in Dangadhi if they have relatives living there. There are no IDP settlements in the district.

As in other border districts, the CDO in Kailali has noted an increase in the number of male youths requesting passports and citizenship documents.

Dadeldhura District

This is a highly affected district where 16 VDC buildings out of 20 have been destroyed by the Maoists. Only one VDC and its staff continue to conduct administrative work from its original office.

A number of teachers, VDC chairmen and politicians have moved from their villages for security reasons and settled in the district headquarters. They have rented hotel rooms or moved in with relatives while their families have remained in the villages. There is no indication of threats directed to these families at this stage.

According to the WFP regional office, there is a high level of forced youth migration to India from Achham and Darchula district as there has been increased pressure from the Maoists to recruit one person per household. Even the development program facilitators have been asked to join the Maoists. In Dadeldhura and Doti districts youths are moving away from their homes due to increased searches and interrogation by the security forces as well as to Maoist pressure.

According to the DDC chairman in Dadeldhura, the vast majority of the rural communities are paralysed by the ongoing conflict. During the ceasefire in 2001, the villagers were asked by the Maoists to support them through the

provision of food, labour or personnel. Many people agreed under pressure, and fearing reprisals. Following the imposition of the state of emergency, these very same people were severely persecuted by the security forces. The government claims that if the villagers were genuinely forced into helping the Maoists, they should not fear meeting government officials. Several cases of civilians being ill treated by the security forces or imprisoned without charges have convinced the community that this logic does not apply.

Kanchanpur District

Kanchanpur district is not as affected by the conflict as Dadeldhura or Kailali. However, 12 VDC buildings out of 19 have been destroyed according to the DDC chairman.

The vast majority of people moving to the district headquarters in Kanchanpur are members of the Tharu ethnic group accused by the security forces of being Maoists but who cannot afford to travel to India. The CDO estimates that 250 people have moved in with their relatives since the state of emergency was declared.

Teachers and politicians fleeing other districts have not settled in Kanchanpur, but moved to Nepalganj, Kathmandu or India.

Youths from Rolpa, Salyan and Rukum are using, in increasingly larger numbers, Kanchanpur as a transit point in their way to India. However, youths from Kanchanpur itself do not seem to be migrating to India in increased numbers.

F. OTHER VICTIMS OF THE CONFLICT

1. WOMEN

Emigration and recruitment of men into Maoist cadres or security forces as well as the killing of male members of the family by both parties have increased women's on-farm duties. Some tasks that were traditionally performed by men, such as ploughing and roofing the houses, have also now fallen upon women head of households and constitute a significant burden.

In addition, forced recruitment of young women by the Maoists along with sexual abuse in Maoist camps and sexual violence against women by the Police have been reported in conflict-affected areas.¹⁵ A large number of women have also been arrested by the Police and face less than adequate detention conditions.¹⁶

¹⁵ Association of Women Journalist, 2002

¹⁶ INSEC, 2001 report.

2. CHILDREN

A report by a human rights organization, Child Workers in Nepal, released in May 2002 estimates that 1,000 children have lost their parents and many more have fled their homes since the Maoist violence broke six years ago. There are also reports that indicate that the Maoists are recruiting and using children as soldiers.¹⁷

In rural areas of conflict-affected districts, health and immunization programs have been disrupted. The rural education system has also suffered as many teachers have been harassed by the Maoists and forced to take shelter in the district headquarters.

Field reports indicate that many children victims of the conflict have been fostered by their relatives. Many others, in districts such as Surketh, are dependent on aid from national and international organizations. There are no figures available on the number of children affected.

3. EX-BONDED LABOURERS (*Ex-Kamaiyas*)

Bonded labour was officially abolished on 17 July 2000. However, land given to the Kamaiyas under official land redistribution systems has eventually ended back in the hands of landlords, with the Kamaiyas falling again into debt due to the lack of income generating activities and shortage of skills. More than 19,000 of these families continue to live in poor conditions because of the government's inability to deliver basic services.

According to GTZ, the Kamaiyas are a vulnerable target for the Maoists given their lack of access to basic services and work opportunities. Moreover, the fact that the Kamaiyas' campaign against bonded labour received Maoist support has made them a target for the security forces.

In districts such as Dadeldhura and Kanchanpur, there are allegations that security forces have been preventing ex-Kamaiyas and rural communities in general from planting crops as they may fall in the hands of the Maoists. These allegations, however, have been denied by district authorities who respond that such restrictions only exist 1 km around military barracks or government compounds.

4. WOUNDED AND SICK

The access to medical care for wounded civilians appears to be very limited. According to the NRCS and different NGOs in the field, the fact that the wounded persons and often their relatives arrive at the health facility without citizenship documents makes them an easy target for the security forces that

¹⁷ Human Rights Watch World Report. Child Soldiers Campaign. 2002.

label them as Maoists. The fear of being arrested has prevented many ordinary civilians from seeking timely medical care.

The government fund for the assistance of wounded has mainly been utilized to cover the costs of medical care for security forces personnel. Despite the fact that the government at central and local level claims that these funds are immediately released, hospitals and patients often complain about the lack of timely reimbursements.

G. AVAILABLE RESOURCES

This section contains a brief summary of resources available in the field. Organizations with a mandate or programs intended to cover the needs of internally displaced or victims of the conflict are included. In addition, a few national and international organizations working for victims of the conflict are mentioned, along with their main strategies and capacity of response. This is not an exhaustive list as it is based on data collected in the field and does not reflect the total extent of available resources for other categories of victims of the conflict.

1. GOVERNMENT

According to sources at the MoHA, the government has not fully analysed the extent of the problem of internal displacement. In addition they note that the conflict and additional security spending has limited the funds available for programs targeting those displaced.

The government has, however, established various compensation and resettlement funds for victims of the conflict, although most of these funds had spent more than their 2001/2 allocations before the end of the fiscal year.

Many DDC chairmen and field NGO workers agree that the government's funds intended for victims are politically linked and that well-connected politicians, bureaucrats and their clients are benefiting more than "ordinary citizens". In addition, as the reports prepared by the CDOs at the district level do not include victims of the security forces, this category of victims does not have the possibility of accessing government resources.

The special funds created by the government include:

Victims of Conflict Fund: Three categories of people can benefit from it:

- Families of deceased officers (police and army). It provides up to NRs 100-150,000 to each family.
- Wounded people. It provides money to cover hospital expenses and treatment of wounded civilians and combatants.

- Internally displaced people. It assists families displaced with NRs 100 per head per day (max. 3 people per family).

Scholarship Program: intended to benefit direct relatives of deceased victims of the conflict. It provides between NRs 10,000 – 20,000 per year to students from primary school to masters degree.

Damage to Private Property Fund: These resources are directly managed by the MoHA and provide cash assistance in the case of property destruction. As the claim has to be approved by the CDO after confirming the validity of it, the process can take several months. Many cases may result in refusal due to the impossibility of verifying the information in conflict-affected areas. Only politically well-connected people have managed to access these resources, including the Home Minister himself, according to field reports.

Concerning delivery of assistance for IDPs, only 3 people out of 148 people officially registered as internally displaced by the CDOs in Banke, Kanchanpur, Kailali and Dadeldhura districts, have received compensation. And these funds were distributed by the CDO in Lalitpur. None of the districts of origin of the displaced have received allocations this year.

In contrast with the vast majority of districts, the CDO in Lalitpur explained that since December 2001 his office has provided living allowances to around 250 people displaced from different areas and whose names were registered in the MoHA list.

The fact that funds are more readily available at the central level raises the fear among district authorities that this may further encourage people to migrate to Kathmandu and major cities. Some CDOs go further by suggesting that the provision of money as the main type of assistance for victims of the conflict is not sustainable. And in their opinion it would be preferable to provide food, clothes, shelter and income generating activities to displaced people according to the needs identified at each district level.

2. UN AGENCIES

- WORLD FOOD PROGRAM (WFP)

WFP runs programs in Jajarkot, Mugu and Bardiya in the Mid Western region and Kailali, Doti, Dadeldhura in the Far Western region. The German partner, GTZ, is the main monitoring organization in the Mid and Far Western region, while at the grassroots level *users committees* are responsible for the programs' implementation.

The main program carry out by WFP and its partner organizations is the Food for Work Program (FfW) as part of the Rural Community Infrastructure Works (RCIW). The program currently covers 33 districts throughout the country.

Other WFP programs include Assistance to Primary School Feeding and Mother and Child Health Care.

In order to assess the impact of the conflict on production and food security in rural communities, WFP has recently launched an informal survey in Dailekh, Kailali, Dadeldhura and Jumla districts. This study will be conducted by the National Labour Academy and results are expected to be released by mid-August 2002.

- UNICEF

UNICEF programs are focused on education and health of women and children. However, and considering the deteriorating situation in districts such as Achham and Dang, a new direction towards rehabilitation of local organisations has been taken. The main focus has been placed on assisting children who cannot go to school because of the conflict and women left behind as heads of household.

The regional office of UNICEF in Nepalgunj supervises all field programs in Dadeldhura, Achham, Humla and Dang districts.

- THE RED CROSS MOVEMENT

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is an organization with an international mandate to assist people displaced because of conflict. Since 2001, the ICRC delegation in Nepal has set aside funding for programs to assist IDPs in need of protection or provision of basic services. No programs have been implemented at this stage because information they have received to date suggests that only individuals with sufficient resources to resettle have been displaced.

However, because of concerns that poorer sectors of the communities may also be forcibly displaced as the conflict continues to escalate, the ICRC has encouraged the NRCS to collect data on the displacement of the most vulnerable groups. Unfortunately, as noted above, no complete data has been collected to date and an ICRC budget of CHF 67,500 available for IDPs remains unspent.

The NRCS has perhaps the most comprehensive network of district chapters and regional warehouses. Unfortunately, the political links of some of its district chapters' chairmen have compromised the perception of neutrality and independence of the institution and placed its members at risk. The vice-chairman of the Tanahun chapter was recently killed, and in districts such as Rolpa, Dailekh and Dang other members of the NRCS involved in political activities have also been killed.

3. INTERNATIONAL NON-GOVERMENT ORGANIZATIONS (INGOs)

- UNITED MISSION TO NEPAL (UMN)

This organization runs health and education programs in some areas of the Mid Western Region. It focuses on enhancing the capacity of community groups and NGOs at the village level to implement development programs.

Recently, UMN and other NGOs involved in projects in the western side of the country such as World Vision, International Nepal Fellowship (INF), TEAM and Human Development and Community Service (HDCS) decided to create a coalition in order to monitor conflict-related displacement and propose strategies of action.

The main objective of this coalition is to develop a monitoring system, with common standard indicators, that allows all their field workers to monitor the displacement of communities and identify the need for intervention.

In large urban centres, the NGO coalition is considering ways to increase the capacity of local communities to absorb the displaced population. Projects such as water and sanitation and Food for Work would not only benefit the newcomers, but also the hosting communities. In addition, training and income generating programmes are likely to increase the skills of displaced people, which would benefit their own communities once IDPs have returned home.

- INTERNATIONAL NEPAL FELLOWSHIP (INF)

INF is implementing programs related to the provision of health care and community development in Doti district in the Far Western region and Bardiya, Dang, Rukum, Rolpa, Salyan, Phiyutan and Surketh in the Mid Western region.

In Banke district headquarters it also runs a community development programme in partnership with the Nepalganj municipality aimed to improve the conditions of marginalized women.

4. NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

- MAITI Nepal

This organization focuses on the rights and welfare of women and children and provides income-generating skill training to girls and women that are at risk of being trafficked. The fact that the organization has transit homes in Kailali and Banke districts with legal and health counselling could be useful in the implementation of specific programs targeting women victims of the conflict.

H. PRIORITY ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED

During discussion at the field level and in Kathmandu, with government and NGO representatives as well as local communities, there was broad agreement on the main issues that need to be addressed. While this section does not represent a complete and exhaustive list of needs of the victims of this conflict, it provides an indication of priority issues that should be the focus of urgent program implementation.

- As those currently being displaced are from the better off sectors of the communities, the priority issue is the lack of basic services for rural vulnerable groups in conflict-affected districts. Delivering basic health services, water, sanitation and education to these groups would be crucial in order to prevent further displacement.

- The lack of purchasing power in the rural areas is also a significant issue. Programs such as Food for Work or Cash for Work would enable impoverished communities to cover basic feeding needs and will avert malnutrition and other associated pathologies in the most vulnerable groups. Skills development and income-generating activities will also encourage rural communities to stay in their villages and not to migrate.

- There is a lack of basic infrastructure works in these rural communities. This issue could be addressed by involving communities in the construction of small development projects as well as providing people with a source of income. These projects would generate a feeling of community ownership and may protect them from destruction or looting by the Maoists in the future.

I. SECURITY ISSUES

Although the issue of security is strictly beyond the scope of this report, a description of the security environment is relevant because of the ramifications it has for the current donor focus on medium to long-term development projects.

In Nepal, as in other conflict-affected countries in the world, the conflict has posed a major challenge to the delivery of services to the people who need them most, while ensuring safety of staff.¹⁸

¹⁸ Nepali Times, 8-14 March 2002.

Events such as intimidation of field workers or looting of property by the Maoists have prompted several organizations to withdraw their personnel and suspend their programs temporarily or definitively in some districts, especially in the Mid and Far Western Regions.

Since the imposition of the state of emergency and subsequent increase in clashes between the security forces and the insurgents, organizations such as WFP, GTZ and UNICEF have not been able to send their field officers to conduct program monitoring.

After the Maoist attack on Achham on the 16th of February 2002, 25 development workers had to be evacuated by helicopter. In June 2002, the Maoists in Bajhang killed a Programme Manager of Plan Nepal.¹⁹ Earlier in 1998, another INGO worker, a Programme Coordinator for USAID, was killed in a Maoist planted booby trap in Salyan district. However, this death appeared to be accidental.

Recently, on 30 June 2002, an UNDP vehicle was burnt in the route to Baitadi in the Far Western Region. The Maoists claimed that the UN was not a target as such but stated that the project was too closely identified with the government.

Some organizations such as INF and UMN have tried to enhance security by hiring its entire field staff at the local level. Most of the foreign staff is used only as a back-up support. However, in districts like Kailali this is not enough to ensure that field workers can conduct all their scheduled visits to the villages, as they have to get permission from the local Maoist commander. If the Maoist leader is of a high rank, it is likely that the permission be granted; however, the decisions are made on a case-by-case basis.

In spite of these incidents, it does not seem that development or humanitarian workers have yet become a target of the Maoists. But it must be stressed that the environment is now of conflict and is no longer suited to the delivery of aid according to traditional long-term development schemes. There is a high feeling of insecurity among foreign and national personnel running programs in or travelling to conflict-affected districts. And local government officials who strongly recommend not venturing out of the district headquarters –and who are not willing to do so themselves- further accentuate this fear.

¹⁹ Kathmandu Post, 07 June 02.

J. CONCLUSIONS

- Despite the fact that it is not possible to draw a complete picture of the dimensions of conflict-related displacement in Nepal, it is clear that only the wealthier groups in affected communities have been displaced to date. The vast majority are politicians or party workers, mainly from the Nepali Congress Party, VDC chairmen, teachers and landlords. These people have either migrated to the district headquarters or larger cities such as Nepalganj or Kathmandu, where they have moved in with their families, built new homes or rented hotel rooms.

- The vulnerable groups such as women, children and elderly, have for the most part been left behind in their villages. The continuation of high intensity conflict might increase adversity amongst the inhabitants of rural areas. Their survival strategies would therefore be altered and this may result in mass migration from certain areas. However, the impact of the conflict on the food availability for rural communities is yet to be established.

- Other groups have been directly affected by the ongoing situation. Women are left as head of households, sexually abused or deprived of their freedom and orphan children and certain ethnic groups require specific attention.

- Large cities such as Nepalganj and Kathmandu along with district headquarters in conflict-affected areas have absorbed a large number of displaced. If the influx of IDPs increases, the existing coping mechanisms of these communities and the provision of basic services by the local municipalities may fail.

- There is evidence that suggests that the seasonal migration patterns have changed as a direct result of the conflict. A larger number of individuals, mainly male youths from conflict-affected districts in the Mid and Far Western regions, have crossed the border into India in recent months in order to escape intimidation from the Maoists and the security forces. The traditional return of working men to their villages of origin at the beginning of the rainy season has not been observed this year.

- Based on available data and observations in the field, the estimated number and type of displaced people suggests that the focus of assistance programs should be on the most vulnerable groups who remain in conflict-affected areas. The delivery of much needed services to these groups would assist in preventing mass displacement in the future.

- Despite the fact that the Ministry of Finance of HMG/N announced in June 2002 that the government is preparing to launch an immediate plan of action to prioritise programmes and reach out the population adversely affected by the conflict, it is very difficult to foresee how this plan would be implemented, even if the resources are allocated.

The implementation of programs would represent a big challenge for the government, as it lacks effective presence in rural areas of conflict-affected districts. In districts such as Kailali, Salyan, Dang and Baitadi, among others, the VDC chairmen are carrying out their daily administration from the district headquarters. In Salyan, the budget allocated by the government for local development has not been spent, as the VDC officials cannot not go to their villages due to Maoist threats.²⁰ Similar situations are taking place in several other districts according to government sources at the MoHA in Kathmandu.

K. RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations are based on the main findings of this report and seek to address some of the most urgent needs of the victims of the conflict through ensuring the provision of basic services and quick impact projects to the most vulnerable.

- To focus on delivering basic services to vulnerable groups in rural areas of the Mid and Far Western regions in order to decrease the potential for a larger number of displaced. One way of achieving this could be the provision of quick income generating programs (e.g. cash for work).

- In order to access the most vulnerable groups in conflict-affected areas, there will need to be a change of modalities from a medium-long term development focus to transitional-emergency programs. In this context, the use of staff with field expertise in the delivery of services in conflict areas may prove useful.

- To enhance the capacity of local authorities and organizations working in district headquarters to monitor the influx of people from conflict-affected areas.

- To support hosting communities in non-affected areas with skill development programs and income generating activities.

- A key element in the monitoring of the needs of and delivery of services to the most affected populations is the coordination of efforts between donors and implementing agencies at the central level. As the political, military and humanitarian environment is so fluid, increased and improved coordination will be crucial.

- To attempt to engage both parties to the conflict in the protection of development and humanitarian programs. This may be difficult, and may not be an avenue open to many foreign government donor agencies themselves,

²⁰ Kathmandu Post, 03 June 2002; Himalayan Times, 08 June 2002.

but it is the only way of ensuring assistance to the most vulnerable groups in a conflict situation.

It may be easier to engage the government security forces as they have publicly stated the need to win the confidence of the ordinary civilians they are committed to protect. With the Maoists it may be more difficult as they seem to perceive internationally supported projects as exploitative and imperialistic. But many grassroots donor projects that have local community support have been allowed to proceed by local Maoist commanders. And the fact that actual decision-making seems to take place at the local and district level may also lead to some positive results.